

## VOTING IN GREAT BRITAIN.

## THE METHOD BY WHICH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ARE SELECTED.

When Elections are called, the Registry of Voters, and the Presidents Agents, Receiver or Illegal Voting—An Elector's Expenses for Which he Must Give Account.

The interest which is taken in this country in the issue of home rule for Ireland is not a matter of question. The generous contributions to the Sun's Parliamentary fund show plainly enough with what lively concern the present Parliamentary elections in Great Britain, in which this is the issue, are regarded by the Sun's readers. To those founders in and about New York who have thus far subscribed \$123,000 to aid the cause of Ireland some account of the laws, so different from our own, which govern the elections and regulate the expenditure of money will prove interesting.

There is in Great Britain and Ireland no fixed day for holding Parliamentary elections. A general election is held whenever a Parliament is dissolved, and "by-elections" are held whenever necessary to fill a seat which happens to become vacant during the existence of a Parliament. The electors of the country must, therefore, be notified of the approach of an election day, and the notification is given them in the following circumscribed manner:

"The first notice of an election is its legal notice," chap. 17, and 18 Victoria, chap. 102. By this act bribery was defined as being the gift, in any manner direct or indirect, of a voter's offer directly or indirectly to procure any office or employment in return for a person's votes, or the giving of any sum of money to a voter in consideration to a person to induce him to procure or to try to procure a person to vote for a candidate, and the like, or the giving of any valuable consideration, or because of the offer of a position or employment, and the receipt of any valuable consideration for voting for a person.

By other acts candidates were forbidden to receive any kickbacks to voters and to give away. Creating is one of whom each candidate is entitled by law to have at each polling place. The system of agents, which exists in Great Britain, and has grown up under a succession of statutes, was principally since her Majesty Queen Victoria's reign. The practice of candidates at Parliamentary elections increased so during the early years of her reign, that in 1850 the first Parliamentary election by Corporation was held.

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"Within a short time after the creation of a vacancy in a seat, whether it be created by the death, resignation, or elevation to the Ministry or the peerage of a member, or by the dissolution of the House, the Speaker issues a writ to the Sheriff of the county within which the constituency is situated which has been deprived of its representation, commanding him to hold an election to fill such vacancy within twenty days from the time he receives the writ. The rule is that the election is held on the last day of the time allowed him by the writ. It is in the issuing of the election writ that the Government has a chance to exert influence in its own behalf, and seek for electioneers in Government strongholds and sent out by the Speaker, and the Ministry thus leads off with a stroke of influence. Writing to an election agent, through whose hands must pass every penny spent by the candidate to secure his return, who, at the end of the campaign, receives a sum paid by the Government, which has expended on behalf of his employee. Nor does his expense capable of indefinite inflation. Statute after statute has fixed the maximum amount to be expended or voted by any agent in his behalf. Although the allowances, in view of the sharp rate of living in England, are not large, they are still considerable, and the election agent in this country who gets off as easily as his English brother might congratulate himself on his good fortune."

While writs are sent to the Sheriff of every county in Great Britain and Ireland, they are not sent to him for every town in his county, several boroughs in England being disfranchised on account of the prevalence of bribery among their inhabitants, and the same is true of the places which are at present disfranchised. These are Canterbury, the seat of the Bishops of All England; Chester, Oxford, one-half of the County of Northampton, and towns like Chester, the seat of a bishop; Macclesfield, the seat of a newly erected bishopric; and Sandwich, one of the Cinque Ports.

There are in Great Britain and Ireland more than seven years, while it may not sit as many months or even weeks. A dissolution is, practically, a dissolution of the House of Commons, and, as such, "by-elections" are occurring constantly. The registration lists of electors must, therefore, be kept complete, in order that the new election may be well attended.

On the 1st of August in each year the sheriff of each county sends a list of persons entitled to vote in that particular constituency.

Among the places which are at present disfranchised are Canterbury, the seat of the

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